



*** Our enhanced logo is now a link to our Newsletter Archives ***

Hi all,

I hope that the summer heat hasn't slowed you down too much yet. It's going to be a long summer but it brings some deliciousness with it. Eggplant, okra, cucumbers – all of these can be so refreshing during the summer. I'm looking forward to pickling some okra this year for the first time. And in case you are wondering, we grow a variety of okra that isn't that slimy! So the big ones are just as good as the little ones and the little ones are pretty good raw. Try it and let me know what you think.

A few weeks ago I was lucky enough to spend the day meeting 2 farmers down near Needville – Stacey Roussel ([All We Need Farms](#)) and the Smith family at [The Barry Farms](#). Now if you have been on a Plant It Forward farm tour with me, you know that I am admittedly not a Farmer, I joined with Plant It Forward because I was an Eater. But as I have worked the markets and gotten to know the other farmers in the area, my appreciation for all of the resources we have around us has increased tremendously. You cannot imagine how innovative and hard-working the people that run a small farm are. I think the hardworking part is something I took for granted, but what I was ignorant about was how creative and thoughtful small, local farmers are. Whether they use livestock to control invasive weeds, or repurpose pallets to be tool storage, or just love their plants and animals, the thought and effort from any small farmer is what brings the best of the best to you. My wish Houston is that all the market and local farms would sell out of produce every week and have to expand to meet the demand. In a city of 4 million people, that shouldn't be too hard, right!

So thank you to the Plant It Forward farmers and all the local farmers that have the passion and dedication to grown food and raise animals for us, the Eaters. My life depends on you.

Plant It Forward prides itself in delivering the freshest produce in Houston. If you are ever not satisfied with the quality of your produce, Plant It Forward will replace it with the same or a comparable vegetable for free.

Your abundant vegetables this week are Cucumber, Long Beans, Eggplant, Malabar Spinach, Mint, Basil, Tomatoes

RECIPES

[Jeffrey Alford & Naomi Duguid's Spicy Cucumber Salad](#)

An oldie, but goodie

Ingredients

- 1 large cucumbers or a few smaller
- cucumbers (about 1 lb)
- 2 tablespoons rice vinegar
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 2 tablespoons peanut or vegetable oil
- 5 Thai dried chiles, or 3 for milder heat
- ½ jalapeño, minced
- 7 Sichuan peppercorns
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ cup packed torn cilantro leaves

Instructions

1. Peel the cucumber (optional), leaving some thin strips of peel on if you wish, for a decorative effect. Cut lengthwise into quarters and discard the seeds (optional). Use the flat side of a cleaver or large knife to bash the cucumber pieces several times. Cut the pieces lengthwise into thinner strips, and then cut crosswise into 2-inch lengths. Place in a medium bowl.
2. In a small bowl, mix together the vinegar and sugar. Pour over the cucumber, mix well, and set aside. Place a wok or skillet over high heat. When it is hot, add the oil and swirl to coat the pan. Toss in the dried chiles, jalapeño, and peppercorns and stir fry for 20-30 seconds. Pour this over the cucumbers. Sprinkle on the salt and mix well.
3. Mound the salad in a shallow bowl. Sprinkle on the cilantro leaves and serve immediately. Note: The traditional way to make this uses 3 tablespoons of oil, giving a well-oiled texture that may be undesirable. If you wish, try both and see which you prefer.

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Cold Chinese-Style Sesame Noodles with Cucumber

I'm up for cold anything these days!

- 2 tablespoons dark (Asian) sesame oil
 - 1 tablespoon soy sauce
 - 1 tablespoon white-wine vinegar or rice vinegar (not seasoned)
 - 1/4 teaspoon sugar
 - 1/4 teaspoon salt, or to taste
 - 1/8 teaspoon dried hot red pepper flakes
 - 6 ounces capellini
 - 1/2 seedless cucumber, cut lengthwise into thin spears and crosswise into thin slices (about 1 cup)
 - 1 scallion, minced, or 1 tablespoon minced fresh coriander
 - 1 1/2 teaspoons sesame seeds, toasted lightly and cooled
1. In a small bowl stir together oil, soy sauce, vinegar, sugar, salt, and red pepper flakes until sugar and salt are dissolved.
 2. In a large saucepan of salted boiling water cook capellini until tender and drain in a colander. Rinse noodles under cold water until cool and drain well.
 3. In a large bowl toss noodles with sauce, cucumber, and scallion or coriander until combined well and divide between 2 plates. Sprinkle noodles with sesame seeds.

Cucumber Yogurt Raita Salad

Thank you again Smitten Kitchen

1 cup (227 grams) plain, full-fat yogurt

1 garlic clove, peeled

1-inch piece of fresh ginger, peeled

1/4 teaspoon granulated sugar

Juice of half a lemon (about 2 tablespoons)

1 tablespoon minced mild or hot fresh chile (I used a jalapeno)

1 teaspoon cumin seeds, black or yellow mustard seeds or nigella seeds (I used black mustard seeds)

2 tablespoons chopped mint leaves, divided

2 tablespoons chopped cilantro leaves, divided

Kosher salt to taste

2 long, English-style cucumbers (2 pounds total)

1 cup cherry or grape tomatoes, diced

1/2 medium red onion, chopped small

Make the dressing by placing yogurt in a medium bowl and using a very fine grater to grate the garlic and ginger over it. Stir in sugar, lemon, chile, seeds, half of the mint and cilantro and season it with salt to taste. Set aside until you're ready to serve the salad.

Cut the cucumbers in half lengthwise, then each half three more times into long wedge-shaped pieces (i.e. 8 long pieces per cucumber). Cut them into 1 to 1 1/2-inch lengths on a diagonal and add them to a big bowl. Pile tomatoes and onion on top and when you're ready to eat, mix half of the dressing with the salad. Sprinkle with remaining mint and cilantro and serve with extra yogurt dressing on the side.

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